

REMARKS

Claims 17-22 are pending after entry of the present amendment. Claims 17-22 are newly added and are based on Claims 11-16. Claims 11-16 are hereby canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer as to the underlying subject matter. Support for the newly added claims may be found throughout the Specification and claims as originally filed, for example, the Specification at page 1, lines 26-28.

(1) Claim Objections

Applicants respectfully submit that the claim objections are hereby rendered moot by the cancellation of Claims 11-16 and the addition of Claims 17-22. Specifically, per the Examiner's request, Claims 17-22 include the reference characters in parentheses.

(2) Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 11-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,507,544 ("McQuade et al") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,368,393 ("Normann"). This rejection is respectfully traversed for at least the following reasons.

Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner's rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). However, solely in order to facilitate prosecution, Applicants hereby cancel Claims 11-16 and add new Claims 17-22. Newly presented Claims 17-22 now specify that "the storage containers (10) are fixedly connected by virtue of the closure being plugged on." Specification, for example, at page 1, lines 26-28. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the Examiner's rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) are hereby rendered moot.

Normann teach a device which is used for connecting plastic bags. Normann at abstract and Figure 1. The device includes extruded PVC tubing which is used as a handle. *Id.* at column 3, lines 30-34. Additionally, two end closures are positioned in the openings formed at the ends of the tubing. *Id.* at Figure 1. As described in Normann, the closures may include a variety of articles such as flashlights, whistles, chemicals, and a nozzle and valve mechanism which may be used to spray chemicals. *Id.* at column 3, lines 52-57.

Whatever else Normann teaches or suggests, Normann does not teach or suggest closures capable of fixedly connecting two or more storage containers. At best, the closures of Normann serve to seal the end of the PVC tubing. *Id.* at Figure 1. Moreover,

the connection of plastic bags is accomplished by grooves and aligned openings at the bottom of each groove, the grooves being spaced apart from each other in the longitudinal direction of the tubing. *Id.* In order to connect the plastic bags to each other, the plastic loops of the plastic bags are placed into the grooves and openings of the device.

McQuade *et al.* fails to remedy the deficiencies of Normann. For one, as acknowledged by the Examiner, McQuade *et al.* does not even teach or fairly suggest a device with closures. Office Action at page 3. Moreover, McQuade *et al.* provides no motivation whatsoever to modify the device of Normann such that the closures are capable of fixedly connecting two or more storage containers.

Accordingly, Claims 17-22 are not properly rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over McQuade *et al.* in view of Normann. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection.

CONCLUSION

In view of the remarks above, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance and request favorable action thereon. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned if any additional information is required.

Respectfully submitted,

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